

Hamilton Development Corporation
October 15, 2014

The Hamilton Development Corporation met at Hamilton Town Hall at 7:30 a.m. on Wednesday, October 15, 2014 with Brian Stein, Rick Mitchell, Anthony Nickas present. Finance Director Deborah Nippes-Mena also present.

Call to order

Brian Stein called the meeting to order at 7:30 a.m. and noted that meeting was being recorded.

Finalize 2014-2015 Annual Plan

Discussion ensued about how Stein and Rick Mitchell had presented HDC's 2014-2015 Annual Plan to Selectmen last night that was generally well received by board. Discussion addressed how the plan includes an aggressive timeline to complete all items on the ambitious plan by April Town Meeting since it is November. The HDC will strive to meet all of the deadlines and Planning Board will potentially have to move forward with changes. HDC members Bill Gisness and David Carey have given their approval of the plan.

Stein entertained a motion to approve the plan. Anthony Nickas moved to adopt the 2014-2015 Annual Plan. Mitchell seconded the motion. VOTE: Unanimous.

Discuss Fall planning session progress for the Hamilton/Wenham Village

Stein described meeting with Gisness where they reviewed progress on modeling and images for the Hamilton/Wenham village. He presented the images and start of the modeling for downtown along Railroad Avenue, Linden and Willow Streets and Route 1A. Three-dimensional modeling will be done of what is allowed by zoning (i.e., maximum of 35' height) and proposal for 59/63 Willow Street property.

Discussion addressed how images would be used for HDC's first planning session on November 8 illustrating three different models showing existing, what is allowed by zoning, and what HDC would propose, to seek comments. The model for discussion at that meeting will cover the Railroad Avenue block including areas of Route 1A, the corner of Willow and Asbury Streets and the former Hansbury property. The same principles and design standards would apply (i.e., height and density).

At the meeting on December 6 focus will be on infrastructure, parking, lighting, benches, signs, sidewalks, etc. and existing model will be used. For the final session in January there will be a review of findings from the previous two meetings. Language for design standards and potential zoning changes will be discussed along with a recap and recommendations to the Town and Planning Board.

Discussion addressed how the HDC is trying to present an idea of what could be done downtown on its Willow Street property and other properties in the area based on zoning, potential zoning, and public input. Also, that 35' height might be allowed but not necessarily seen in the area. Design guidelines (aesthetics and scale) and zoning by-law would be reviewed as part of a Special Permit process with Planning Board.

Also mentioned was if modification would be done to the existing by-law or Willow Street overlay district (Gourdeau property to Asbury Street) to encompass the entire downtown. The Planning Board has permitted one building with the current zoning by-law that has not been built yet that allows for mixed-use and potentially more height above what the current business zoning by-law does. This is at the Planning Board's discretion and certain set back requirements have to be met.

Stein described the images that had three different views of the downtown (i.e., looking down Railroad Avenue, and facing in the other direction) as it exists and possible proposals for two to three stories at 25'. Discussion ensued about potentially having an anchoring building at the intersection of Railroad Avenue and Route 1A that contains one or more businesses to encourage people to look up the street. Parking requirements will be reviewed in the second planning session. Discussion addressed whether or not there should be zero lot lines or setbacks so buildings would no longer have narrow alleys but would be located right next to one another. The HDC is striving to understand what the public is comfortable with in the downtown area as part of determining if any or what size wastewater treatment system would be needed.

Downtown resident Barbara Lawrence opined that the images presented reminded her of Rantoul Street in Beverly. She suggested a cost benefit analysis be done to understand what the cost of changing the downtown would be for the Town. Lawrence opined that she does not want to live where there is more density. Stein stated that he is a downtown resident as well and would like to see improvements in the area. He concurred that once it is understood what changes the Town would be comfortable with then ULI will do a cost benefit analysis to determine possibility for any additional revenue and need for sewer system.

Discussion addressed how the Corporation's mandate is to look at potential downtown development and seek public input to understand what residents would be comfortable with (i.e., limited or no development). If feedback is for further development, the HDC will either ask the Town or find external resources to do a cost benefit analysis relative to an incremental process of what people want, will support and pay for.

Discussion reiterated how HDC is resource constrained relative to doing a cost/benefit analysis, and its intent is to create an inviting village versus just a changed downtown as it identifies design standards and seeks public input. Also addressed was how there are no projections about potential residents downtown improvements would bring to the area, and impact on the school system and public safety departments. Also mentioned was that Hamilton's culture operates in silos (i.e., development is fine in someone else's neighborhood), emphasizing the importance of downtown residents and as much of the public as possible being involved in HDC planning process.

Discussion ensued about conversations HDC has had with developers and landowners where it was identified that there is need for more and different types of businesses in Town (i.e., non-industrial use). There are a defined set of uses in business district and Willow Street overlay district. Discussion reiterated for public buy-in on any downtown development there has to be a concise vision on zoning, design standards and wastewater.

Discussion was on consideration of what could be done with space behind Mac's Shoe including a mixed use building in the far back facing towards the parking lot behind bank and stores on Route 1A and Railroad Avenue to facilitate location of store fronts. Also, having green space and pathways in the area. To be financially viable, the two to three-story building is recommended to be 65' wide and 170' feet long and contain 24 residential units and some retail spots. It would contain one floor of retail and a couple floors of residential apartments. The intent is to provide scenarios of uses and sense of scale so public can provide feedback.

Discussion addressed how the Town will post information about the upcoming HDC planning sessions on the Town website, and HDC could work with Town's Information Specialist relative to Facebook and Twitter. The meetings will be at either the Senior Center or the HW Public Library. The HDC will use its existing mailing list to contact abutters. A new Director of Planning and Inspections will begin working for Hamilton on November 11. Also, a coordination position that would provide administrative support for Community Preservation Committee and Affordable Housing Trust and HDC has been posted to fill open slot.

59/63 Willow Street Property discussion

Discussion ensued about how there are interested parties in renting the remaining open commercial space at Mac's Shoe store and equipment in the store needs to be removed, possibly by scrap metal collector. Also mentioned was that space needs cleaning and painting that could possibly be done by volunteers such as the Rotary Club or Boy Scouts.

HDC Administration

Discussion was on how HDC leadership team should speak to Town Manager Michael Lombardo relative to contract for administrative assistance that has been extended until December. Planning support will be provided beginning on November 11. It was noted that HWCAM would be contacted to record HDC planning meetings, Nippes-Mena will provide abutters list and conversations will occur with Mary Beth Lawton about using Senior Center space, and Town's Communication Specialist for digital communication.

NEW/OLD BUSINESS

Discussion reiterated how the HDC needs to rent space at its Willow Street property to keep up with expenses.

Mitchell moved at 8:30 a.m. to adjourn. Nickas seconded the motion. VOTE:
Unanimous.

Respectfully submitted by Jane Dooley, Minutes Secretary

ATTEST: _____

Brian Stein, President

